

La Crosse County

Stella Clark

I was born on September 16, 1900 in Long Coulee near Holmen. My father was a carpenter who built many homes in western Wisconsin. I attended normal school in La Crosse and received a teaching certificate.

My first teaching job was in the Glasgow school district. I was in charge of the school and received \$40 a month. I bought my first car, a Model T, in 1925.

In 1921, I married and had a daughter. My husband died in 1925; I remarried in 1930. My second husband and I had a restaurant and barbershop, and I did substitute teaching. I am active at the Senior Citizens' Center, play cards and go to the beauty parlor weekly.

I've lived a full and wonderful life. I have a great-great-granddaughter, four great-grandchildren, and two grandchildren, making five generations. My mother lived to 106 and had six generations in her lifetime.

Salome Korn

Salome was born on December 12, 1898 on a farm near Middle Ridge. She married John Korn in 1919 and they had three children. They farmed and owned a tavern and dance hall at Newburg's Corner. There were many good times at the weddings and parties held there. Salome's daughter and son-in-law bought the tavern and still run it.

Salome stayed on the farm for 10 years after her husband died. In 1964, she moved to Bangor and got a job in a restaurant. She enjoyed getting out among people. Still active, Salome does her own grocery shopping and most of her own housework. She keeps up with the news through TV, newspapers and chatting on the phone with her sisters.

Hazel Streeton

Born on August 18, 1899 in West Salem, Hazel had four siblings. She started working after the eighth grade – she and a sister had a laundry service for businesses in the town.

Hazel married George Streeton in 1916; they had five children. After her husband died, Hazel's two sons took over the farm. They all live in the old farmhouse that was made into three apartments, one for each of them. "I am so proud," says Hazel, "to have lived in the same house since 1916." She often cooks for her sons ? usually meat, potatoes, corn, tomatoes and homemade cookies. Hazel says she is living proof that work never hurt anyone.

Lafayette County

Frieda Schlafli

On November 23, 1898, Frieda was born in Switzerland. The family lived above the restaurant they owned. Frieda met her future husband in a cheese factory where he was an apprentice. August went off to America, and after getting a job, he sent for Frieda. Quarantined on Ellis Island due to a typhoid outbreak, Frieda was finally reunited with August. They married in Monroe in 1921 and moved from one cheese factory to another as he rose in his field. After a trip to Switzerland in 1927, they returned to Wisconsin and settled down with their four children.

Since her husband's death in 1956, Frieda has lived among her family and friends, being active and contented. Through the years she learned English and adapted to American culture.

Langlade County

Lettie Borneman

Born on February 27, 1897 in Antigo, Lettie worked from a young age, rising at 3:30 a.m. to help her father saw and load logs. She drove the horses and sleigh eight miles each way to unload the logs and return. Even after she married Martin Ver Hagen, she continued logging, helping her husband. They also farmed together and had 14 children including one set of twins. Martin died in 1949 and Lettie farmed with two of the children. Later, she married Leonard Borneman; they were married for 20 years. When he died, Lettie moved to California where she lived with a son for seven years.

Lettie continues to sew, making quilt patches. She was known for her sewing ability and her talent in writing poems. Today she is especially close to her daughter-in-law Monica Ver Hagen who visits with her often.

Dewey Boyd

Dewey was born on February 17, 1899 in Kentucky. His family moved to Antigo in 1914. Dewey, who is the oldest member of the American Legion, served in both World Wars and met Presidents Eisenhower and Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Dewey remembers one day getting a ride from Lily to White Lake with John Dillinger, the notorious gangster, whom Dewey did not recognize. Dillinger showed Dewey the guns in the back of his car. Dewey also recalls seeing a wad of \$50 bills stuffed in Dillinger's shirt pocket.

Dewey still enjoys playing the banjo, and he has written folk stories about historical events. His favorite times were playing for square dancing with Ben Evans playing the fiddle.

Langlade County

Ted Duchac

Born on August 28, 1900 in Antigo, Ted is the son of Joseph Duchac, who in the 1880s convinced over 800 families to move from Chicago to Antigo. The family lived in a large house, and Joseph made and lost several fortunes. Ted recalls that Antigo was a boomtown, and that he was always able to find a job. There were two breweries, and a hotel room with a meal cost 75¢

Ted was a lumberjack in Michigan, an oil field worker in Texas, and a surveyor for the Chicago subway system where he learned to draw road maps. This led to his ultimate job as art director for the *Pure Oil Company Magazine*. He retired to Antigo when he was 86.

Ted was married twice but has no children. Today he and his second wife and their cat “Bummer” keep house together. Ted continues to shovel snow and is in charge of cooking and shopping.

Lincoln County

Benjamin “Benny” Bahlow

Benny was born in Illinois on November 14, 1899 into a family of 14 children. In 1915, they moved to Wisconsin where land was cheap. From 1915 to 1930, Benny worked on his dad’s farm, receiving only room and board, “and not getting paid even a nickel to buy my girlfriend an ice cream cone.” In 1930, Benny married and got his own farm in Corning.

Benny loved his farm animals and felt he had a special rapport with them – he once cleared a field and the cows were afraid to go into it. He says, “I put my arm around Maggie, my favorite cow, and said, ‘let’s go’ and she did, and the rest of the herd followed.” In 1958, Benny sold his farm and took a job in a factory, “which felt like a prison.” At age 66 he retired. Benny still feels he has a purpose in life.

Sr. Agricola Zbinden

Eighty of Sr. Agricola’s 100 years have been spent in religious life. Born in Switzerland on December 21, 1899, she entered the convent of the Sisters of Mercy of the Holy Cross at the age of 19.

“As a child, I prayed that the Lord would show me the way,” Sr. Agricola says. She was trained as a nurse. After working in Zurich, she came to the United States with a group of Sisters. She worked as a nurse in North Dakota and in Champaign, Illinois where she helped to found Mercy Hospital. In 1932, she went to Dickinson as superior and administrator of St. Joseph Hospital.

Agricola now lives in Merrill. She has an active interest in current events through materials for the visually impaired. She also has the spirit of adventure that she had 80 years ago.

Manitowoc County

Hilda Albrecht

Born on February 21, 1898 in Meeme, Hilda grew up on the family farm. When she married Edgar Albrecht in 1925, they ran the home farm. Like other farm wives, Hilda canned, made butter and smoked meat. She recalls, "the best bread I baked was in the outdoor oven. When the wood was burned, the oven was hot enough to bake bread."

Hilda thought the telephone was the nicest invention because it helped farm people overcome their isolation. Today, she enjoys exercise classes and playing bingo. Hilda believes the hard work she did on the farm has helped her to remain healthy and active.

Charlie Chermak

Charlie was born on January 1, 1901 in Manitowoc and has lived there his whole life. He operated a meat market with his brothers. He was proud of the 3,000 cabbages he planted every year, taking up an entire block. He shredded them into 300 one-gallon crocks and made sauerkraut that he sold. Charlie is an avid Packers fan; he started to buy tickets when Vince Lombardi issued the first tickets. "There were just a few rows of wooden seats." Today, Charlie watches games on TV.

Quirin Delsman

Born on September 6, 1901, Quirin graduated from Whitewater College in 1923 as a commercial education teacher. He owned the Smalley Manufacturing Company in Manitowoc that produced farm equipment. He retired in his late 60s but came out of retirement when he was 90 to sell the business. Among his many accomplishments, he is most proud of being one of the founders of Holy Innocent Church. To Quirin, one of the most significant inventions was the automatic starter on cars. He recalls that many an arm was broken trying to crank a Model T; he believes the automatic starter enabled women to drive.

Evelyn Jens

Evelyn was an only child, born on August 6, 1897 in Cleveland (WI). When she was 16, she and her parents took an eight-month trip by train to the West Coast to visit friends and relatives. Later, Evelyn worked in the office at the Pauly Cheese Company.

Evelyn married Elmer Jens. They had one son who lives in South Carolina; there are several grandchildren and one great-grandchild. Evelyn enjoys playing bridge and sheepshead. She says: "I never smoked or drank, except for an occasional highball."

Manitowoc County

Jenny Diefenthaler

Jenny has lived in the same house in Kiel for 74 years. When she and her husband built the house, they were isolated. Jenny has watched the town grow up around her. She was born on October 22, 1896 in Oklahoma's Indian Territory. She married Edwin Diefenthaler in 1918. After World War I, they moved to Kiel. Of their four children, the twins were in World War II where one died in a German prisoner of war camp. A daughter died of cancer and Edwin died in the 1960s.

Jenny boasts that she has never smoked, danced, played cards, or driven a car, and that she hardly ever watches TV, but life has still been fun.

Florence Koutnik

"I never thought I'd be around this long," says Florence, who was born on January 23, 1899. Manitowoc has been her home for almost all of her life. "Things were so different then – milk was delivered and sidewalks were wooden." She went to Chicago to attend "Mrs. Parson's School of Physical Education" and remembers Armistice Day: "You couldn't move, the streets were so mobbed." She was a kindergarten assistant for several years and then married Edward Koutnik in 1925.

Frieda Kitzerow

Frieda spent most of her school years in Medford although she was born in Berlin (WI) on November 2, 1897. After grade school, Frieda worked in Milwaukee as a housekeeper. In 1922, she married Reinhold Kitzerow and moved to a farm near Cato. While vacations were unheard of, Frieda recalls "card parties with neighbors." When the children were grown, Frieda and Reiny sold the farm. He then worked in a paper factory and she as a seamstress.

About her first Maytag wringer washer: "I spent days looking at it before I had the courage to use it. After I did, I never went back to the washboard." Since her husband died in 1986, Frieda lives quietly, enjoying visits from her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Frieda Krueger

Born on May 2, 1900, Frieda has lived on a farm in Manitowoc County her whole life. She and her brother farmed together until his death. Frieda came to modern life very late. Although there was running water in the barn, it was not brought into the house until the 1970s. Frieda says she never minded not having modern conveniences, except for one: "When it snowed, I hated the wet, cold seat in the outhouse." Today, she happily accepts most modern inventions.

Bette Kneevers

Born on January 2, 1900, Bette grew up with one thought: "All I talked about was being in show business," she says. Working in Milwaukee as a waitress, she saw an advertisement to join the "Fearless Gregg" show. Bette not only joined the show, but a year later, married the owner, Fred Gregg.

Bette performed a stunt called "Autos that Pass in the Air": She and Fred climbed a tall ladder, then got into two cars parked one behind the other at the top of a ski-type jump. The vehicles took off, reaching 150 mph. As they flew off the ramp, Fred's car did loops above Bette's, then both landed on a special platform, built to absorb shock, "or we would have been killed. I was never afraid; what a daredevil I was," she marvels.

The "Fearless Greg" show traveled for 20 years, entertaining the King of England and the Emperor of Japan. Bette and Fred met Bing Crosby who asked them to perform in "Pennies from Heaven." It was their last performance. Fred's age kept him from continuing, so they settled in California until his death in 1965. Bette then moved to Plymouth. In 1978, at the Plymouth Senior Center, she met Earl Kneevers, a retired court reporter. They married and lived happily until Earl's death in 1993. Bette says, "I had the life I wanted. Not many people can say that. You just have to go out and get it."

Minnie Meiselwitz

Born on June 3, 1901, Minnie has lived in Kiel all her life. Her parents ran a store and tavern. Minnie married Henry Meiselwitz who was in the funeral business with his father. Minnie helped by cooking meals for people who came from out of town for funerals. She was "on call" at their combined funeral home and furniture store when her husband and his father "went off to pick up a body in their wagon."

Besides working in the family business, Minnie entered Girl Scouting (they had three children) as a diversion, and joined the Girl Scout Council; she was on their board for 50 years. She was also active in her church, later becoming the first elder. The Manitowoc County Aging Resource Center honored Minnie in 1990 as one of the county's "Women of the Year."

Minnie learned to type on a manual typewriter and was never comfortable using an electric typewriter. Now, she thinks the computer is the most perplexing change in our time. She wishes she could "get over this hump" and master it.

"There's a regular way to do something and the Scout way. The Scout way is more fun." Minnie Meiselwitz

Manitowoc County

Mary Janet Reynolds

Born on March 3, 1899, in St. Paul, Minnesota, Mary Jane was ahead of her time. She wanted to be a veterinarian but her father would not permit it, as it would put her in contact with “a poor crowd.” Instead, she became a professional exhibitor, showing horses for other people. She also worked at Johns Hopkins Hospital taking surgical and autopsy dictation.

Mary Janet voted in the first election in which women were allowed to vote. While there were voting booths for men, there were none for women, so the women’s votes were quite public.

Mary Janet lives in Manitowoc near her nephew. She tells young people to get a good education: “this is more important than a lot of cash.”

Lily Schneider

“We never fought and never said sassy words to each other or to anybody else.” Lily, who was born on May 19, 1900, attributes her long marriage to this rule. She worked with her husband on their farm for 66 years. He died at the age of 96; they had seven children.

Lily has recently renewed her hobby of crocheting for friends and family. She believes the automobile was the greatest achievement during her lifetime, especially in helping rural people connect with each other and with the rest of the world.

Harry Walter

“Sometimes life is good, sometimes it’s not so good,” says Harry, who was born on December 7, 1899. He adds, “I can’t complain; I’ve been in good health.” He’s also been able to stay independent – he still drives his 1980 Ford around Manitowoc, although he admits, “I stay off the highways.”

Harry met his wife Leone while working for Hoffman Brothers Company as a glove-maker. He once tried a job in the shipbuilding yards in Manitowoc. “After a few hours of scraping paint, I made my way back to the glove factory.” Eventually, he and his wife bought a Miller High Life beer distributorship in 1964. “Although I sold beer, I never drank and I never smoked.” He believes this is why he’s lived so long.

Marathon County

Clara Baltz Degner

Clara was born on February 20, 1898 in Rib Falls, one of seven boys and three girls. Her family lived in Athens where her father owned a tavern and farm.

Clara married Herman Degner; they had no children. Clara comes from a long-lived family. Her younger brother Arthur lived to 99, two other brothers, Louis and Edwin are in their 90s and “baby” brother, Johnny, is 88. Clara loved to dance, and no wonder? when they were young, they had a family band, “The Silver Rhythm Band.” Johnny played the sax and clarinet, Louie the xylophone and drums, Emil the trombone, and Ella the piano.

“This family all grew up on good Wisconsin cheese, cream, butter, eggs, bacon, beef, and of course, brats and beer.”

Clarence Baltz (Art’s son and Clara’s nephew.)

Lillian Dittbrender Grimm

One of the first telephone operators in the area, Lillian was born on May 6, 1901. Her father, John Dittbrender, was in Marathon county politics, and Lillian was always politically aware. She was a census-taker for several townships, clerked in a general store and later worked in Chicago as a nanny.

In 1929, she married Nick Grimm, the son of a prize-winning cheesemaker. Lillian and Nick farmed in Easton until the Depression when they sold their farm and moved to Wausau. Nick ran a general store there, and Lillian was a private-duty nurse until she was almost 80. Lillian has three living children; she lost two children in their infancy. Nick died in 1979.

Andrew Small

At 108, Andrew, who was born on December 26, 1891, is the oldest member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars in Wisconsin and the only survivor of the Punitive Expedition of the Mexican Revolution. Born in Austria, Andrew was working in Belgium with his brother, loading herring on a ship bound for America. They were offered a ride to unload the cargo overseas. When they got to New York, they kept going, Andrew to Chicago, his brother to the Dakotas.

Andrew enlisted in the U.S. Army and went to Mexico tracking Pancho Villa. Unsuccessful, Andrew’s regiment was sent to Europe to fight. As an Austrian citizen, Andrew was not permitted to fight in Europe. He later learned his regiment had been wiped out. Andrew was honorably discharged in 1920 and given U.S. citizenship. He married that year; he and Mary had one son. They farmed in Rocky Ridge from 1944 to 1962 and retired to Mosinee. Andrew notes that his son fought in World War II and his grandson fought in the Vietnam War.

Emma Haley Fredrikson

On her birthday two years ago, Emma was driven around Niagra in a convertible with a sign reading, "Cruising at 105." Her only complaint is that "my knees are getting sore." Born on June 20, 1893, in Peshtigo, she recalls that going into town for supplies was a big event for the eight children in the family. "We would pile into the wagon for the long trip of 36 miles." Emma took teacher's training in Marinette and at 18 taught 20 children, including her own five siblings in a country school.

Emma married Carl Fredrikson and had two children. They farmed for 54 years, going to a lumber camp in the winters where Carl logged and Emma cooked. "I never made pies," she says, "I cooked anything but pies."

Marquette County

Jessie Metcalf

Jessie was born on January 5, 1896 in the town of Buffalo. She graduated from Montello High School in 1919 and is still proud that she passed the examination for a teaching certificate. She taught school and in 1923, married Walter Metcalf. They farmed near Montello, and they had eight children.

In 1973, Walter died and Jessie sold the farm to two of their sons. She stayed on in Montello. Jessie loved the first radio they bought and she likes cars. But she knows that bread baked in a wood-burning stove is much better than bread baked in a modern oven.

Milwaukee County

Lu Chapman

Born on June 11, 1899 in New York City, Lu worked as a seamstress and made lampshades. She also played the piano for silent movies. When she was 18, she played for the soldiers in Camp Merit where she met her husband. When she was 21, they married, settled in Milwaukee and had three sons. She remembers that they bought a house for \$5,000. When her husband died, Lu took various jobs to support her children. Lu believes in longevity genes ? her mother lived to 105, her brother to 94. She also believes in vegetables and vitamins.

Milwaukee County

Lillian Haessly

Lillian reads the newspaper without glasses and in good weather takes a bus to church, the bank, and the hairdresser. Born on January 20, 1900, she was the oldest of 11 children. When she was eight years old, the family moved from Cleveland (WI) to Milwaukee where she completed the eighth grade and went to work at Everwear Hosiery. Later, she was a secretary at the Durant Corporation. She loves visits from her family.

Sophie Horbinski

Making up for years of ill health as a child, Sophie (born on May 7, 1899) went on to be energetic for 90 years. She entered school at 11, but after two years she went to work as a nanny. Sophie managed a bakery for 32 years and a deli for 15 years. Finally retired at age 80, she was in a dress shop one day and heard a clerk recommending an unflattering dress. She stepped in and helped the customer. The manager offered Sophie a job, and she worked there for four years.

Sophie still does her own housecleaning and cooks twice a week for her son and daughter-in-law. Her “fun” activity is gambling nickels at a nearby casino. “I love it,” she laughs, “and I once won \$5,000.”

Osceola Jones

Five generations of her family celebrated Osceola’s 100th birthday. Born in Mississippi in 1899, she lived on a farm until she married Hubert Jones. In 1951, they moved to Milwaukee. They had ten children; seven are still living. In good health (she started to wear glasses only 10 years ago), she enjoys quilting. Osceola is pleased about the advances in technology but is saddened by the proliferation of drugs and violence that keep young people from living full lives.

Viola Klinger

Born on March 27, 1901, Viola grew up on a farm in West Grandville. She went to a German-speaking school in the mornings and to a public school in the afternoon where she spoke English. Two of her sisters are in their 90s – one still drives and often visits Viola. Viola married Art Klinger in 1925. He worked for the railroad and built a house in Menomonee Falls out of lumber from old railway cars. The house is still standing and lived in. For many years Viola was a 4H leader. She has one son who lives in Menomonee Falls.

Milwaukee County

Adelaide Krueger

The youngest of five children, Adelaide, born on November 20, 1898, inherited her mother's love of nature and gardening. She remembers that "I followed my mother and learned early to love the woods, animals and plants." When in high school, she says, "a garden became as important to me as windows are to a house, and my fondest dream was to have a garden of my own some day."

This happened when she married Harry Krueger, whom she calls, "a gardener, a true farmer at heart." Two children and thirteen years later they built a stone house and garden. Adelaide's garden is still a place of beauty, and she still receives awards.

Max Mallin

Born on March 12, 1901 in Russia, Max was brought here as a child by his parents who settled in Milwaukee. He went through high school and graduated from the UW-Milwaukee School of Business. He recalls the two major jobs he held: in sales for Phillip Morris Tobacco Company and as credit manager for Vilter Manufacturing. He married Bertha Pasch and they had two children. There are six grandchildren.

Max remembers that his father did not have a car but that his older brothers had a Ford and he owned a car later. Both his brothers were in the service, "but," he says, "I was the wrong age for all the wars – too young for World War I and too old for World War II."

Max gives young people advice: "I have enjoyed my life. The key is to work, to raise a family, and to be honest in your daily life."

Eleanor Marsh

There was a terrible snowstorm the night that she was born, and Eleanor's father had to carry the midwife on his back through the snow? it was January 8, 1896 on a farm near Neenah. Eleanor grew up loving the farm animals and would have been a veterinarian had it been possible in her day.

In 1917 she married Elwin William Marsh and they had one daughter. The Marshes marveled at each new invention, from the "dime flickers" (movies) to the Harley Davidson motorcycle and sidecar that they bought. Eyebrows were raised when Eleanor wore "Russian bloomers" while riding the motorcycle and working on the farm. When she was 100 years old Eleanor was still living in the house they bought in 1930.

Milwaukee County

Cora Priest

Cora was born on August 17, 1893 on a farm in Waterville, Mississippi, the oldest of four children. She has been married four times and divorced twice. She has always advised: "If your husband abuses you, you leave." She did that herself, twice. She had one son whom she raised alone. "Women can do anything they want if they put their mind to it," she says.

Cora, a seamstress, made and sold clothes. She helped found her church, Mt. Leobon, and made all the choir robes from patterns she designed. She helped raise her nieces and nephews and, in her 80s, her grandchildren. She was called the "best cook in town" and in her 70s learned to drive a car. Cora has always moved with the times.

Monroe County

Lloyd Dreier

Lloyd was born in Norwalk on September 11, 1898. In an interview that his great-granddaughter Amy Flock did when she was 10, he told her that "we kids would crawl under the wooden sidewalks looking for pennies people dropped."

In 1907, Lloyd's father bought a farm and Lloyd grew up working the land and enjoying it. When he married Lillian Roeske, he and his father worked the farm together.

Lloyd enjoyed playing baseball and basketball. He was a Monroe County Bearcat and on the Norwalk City League. The teams they played were on the railroad line. The team would take the train to a town to play ball and then return, sometimes at 3 or 4 a.m. After Lillian's death, Lloyd married Ella Muelenkamp and they continued to farm.

Alvin Olesen

Born on September 9, 1899 in Juneau County, Alvin had two brothers. He worked as a cook on a bridge crew at Fort McCoy. He says that he always wanted to become a shoe cobbler, but instead became a good carpenter and from his work developed an interesting hobby. He carves crosses out of wood scraps. His work is renowned ? his crosses are in Norway, Denmark, Germany, Africa, China and Israel. He made a replica of a train he rode on from Omaha to Minneapolis that is displayed at the Tomah Historical Museum. When asked why he never married, he says, chuckling, "That would take all day to tell."

Monroe County

Edna Waters

Edna was born on March 22, 1899 near Necedah. At the age of 16 she left home to learn to sew and earn her own living. She met and married Charles Waters in 1922. In 1941 Charley, who had been in the National Guard, was recalled to active duty at the age of 49. Edna and their daughter traveled through the south as he moved from camp to camp.

She remembers sitting on nail kegs for chairs in Mississippi and eating yams and pecans. In 1942 Edna and Delores went home to Camp Douglas.

After Charley returned, their daughter married a career Army officer. Edna and Charley traveled through most of the U.S. visiting the young couple wherever they were stationed. Edna flew for the first time when she was 89. Eventually, Delores and her family settled next door to Edna and Charley and Edna became an integral part of their lives, as well as having a great impact on the life of her grandson.